

Choir Leading and Leadership

A study of choir leader's views on leadership

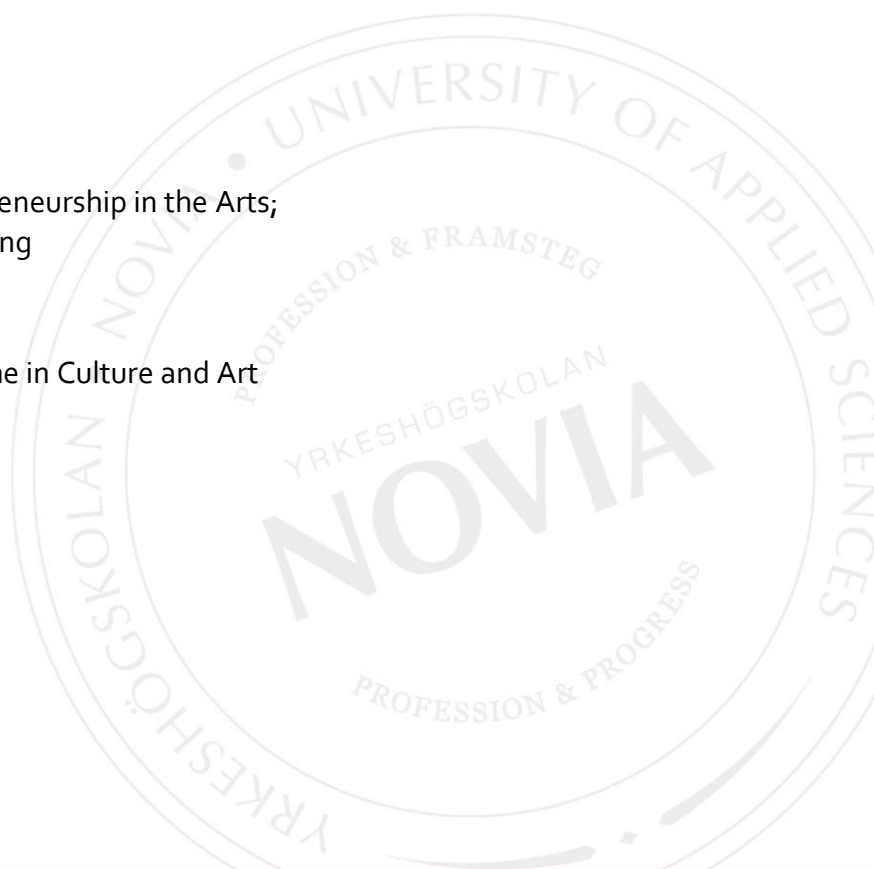
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MASTER'S THESIS

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Appendices 2

In the business world there are a comprehensive theory about leadership. In this master's thesis choir leading is seen as a form of leadership and the aim of this thesis is to study the meaning of leadership in choir leading.

I have made a questionnaire among choir leaders in Finland, to clarify how choir leaders look at leadership and which leadership qualities are seen as important in the job as a choir leader. To deepen the understanding of the meaning of leadership and as a complement to my study, I have interviewed three active choir leaders.

On the basis of my study, one can draw the conclusion that leadership is seen as an important part of the choir leader's work and is considered being an important competence. Furthermore, a choir leader is not successful only because s/he has good leadership skills, but the informants emphasize the need to combine these skills in choir leading, if one wants to achieve good results.

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Abstrakt

Inom företagsvärlden finns det en omfattande teoribildning kring ledarskap. I detta examensarbete ses körledning som en form av ledarskap och syftet med denna studie är att studera ledarskapets betydelse i en körkontext.

Jag har genomfört en enkätundersökning bland körledare i Finland för att klargöra hur olika körledare ser på ledarskap och vilka ledarskapsegenskaper de anser vara viktiga i sitt arbete som körledare. För att fördjupa förståelsen av ledarskapets betydelse har enkätundersökningen kompletterats med intervjuer med tre verksamma körledare.

Utgående från min undersökning kan man dra slutsatsen att ledarskap ses som en viktig del av körledarens arbete och anses vara en viktig kompetens. En körledare är ändå inte framgångsrik enbart för att hen besitter goda ledaregenskaper utan informanterna lyfter fram att man även behöver kunna kombinera dessa med färdigheter inom körledning om man vill uppnå ett gott resultat.

Språk: Engelska

Nyckelord: Körledning, Ledarskap

OPINNÄYTETYÖ

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Liitteet 2

Yritysmailmassa on olemassa monenlaisia ja monen taseisia teorioita johtajuudesta. Tässä opinnäytetyössä käsittelen kuoronjohtamista osana johtamistaitoa, ja työn tarkoitus on tutkia johtajuuden merkitys kuoronjohtamisessa.

Selvittääkseni miten eri kuoronjohtajat näkevät johtajuutta ja minkälaisia johtamistaitoja he pitävät tärkeinä omassa työssään kuoronjohtajina, olen tehnyt kyselyn kuoronjohtajien kesken. Saadakseni yhä syvemmän ymmärryksen johtamisen merkityksestä olen täydentänyt tutkimukseni kolmen eri kuoronjohtajan haastattelulla.

Johtopäätökseni on, että johtajuus on tärkeä osa kuoronjohtajan työtä ja että kuoronjohtaja kokee johtajuutta tärkeänä osaamisalueena. Kuoronjohtaja ei voi olla menestyvä, ellei hän omaa hyviä johtamistaitoja ammattiosaamisen lisäksi. Tutkielman vastaajat korostavat nimenomaan taidon yhdistää yksilöllisten ihmisten johtamista kuoronjohtamiseen, jotta lopputulos olisi mahdollisimman hyvä.

Kieli: Englanti

Avainsanat: Kuoron johtaminen, Johtamistaidot

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APPENDICES

1 Introduction

In autumn 2014 I got a telephone call from my current employer, asking if I would like to come and work as a substitute for the music teacher in spring 2015. The job included conducting three choirs and a song group. I considered it for a while but accepted the job. It was, after all, one that I had my eyes on, since I knew the teacher would soon retire. The same year the teacher retired I got the job as the new music teacher.

I have studied music since I was a child, played in orchestras as well as sung in choirs. I have also worked as professional orchestra musician. Therefore, the job was not unfamiliar for me, nor the stroke pattern or rehearsal of songs. But to move from being a choir singer to leading a choir is not that easy. I was not only a young musician or a music teacher anymore - I was *a leader*. I had the main responsibility for a group, the repertoire, concerts, choir sound, cohesion etc. From this day *leadership* was a part of my daily profession, although I did not reflect upon it then.

If one goes to any library books about leadership and managing companies are easy to find: "How to be a Leader", "Leadership and Balance", "Lead Your Team", "Laws about Leadership". Name a title and probably it exists, but is there not more fields in leadership than companies, business or marketing? Is not choir leading only another form of leadership? In the cultural field the range of books about leadership is deficient.

Tone Bianca Dahl is an experienced choir leader, who teaches choir leading and conducting in Oslo. In the introduction of her book *Körkonst* (Dahl 2002, "The Art of Choir Leading", authors' translation) she writes a few thoughts on being a choir leader. One of her ideas resonates especially well with how I also look upon choir leading: *"The task is big, but the reward is the golden moments. When time in a moment stands still, the whole choir is as one organism, one body, one breath, one thought."* (Dahl, 2002, 11)

I have had one moment like this, my first epiphany with my choir. This was the first real I-love-this-job moment and the first now-we-are-one-voice-feeling. It was great! It was in spring 2018, after one day on a choir festival and on our third and last performance for the day. In a few seconds I had the feeling we were perfectly in harmony, perfectly together, in the same feeling and together on the same road. We were one. One choir – one voice. It felt incredible and so right. For only those few seconds I forgot everything else, all the work, all the nervousness and the audience. All the hours of work, alone and together with

the choir are really worth it. But how would one achieve these experiences regularly? Is this a sign of hard work or is it a coincidence? Is it an evidence of being a good choir leader and/or a good choir? Or is it a result of good leadership?

The choir leader is obviously more than a person who is standing in front of a choir and moving one's arms a little bit. One is more than the person leading the beat, the beginning and the end of a song. In fact, most of the job a choir leader is doing happens during the rehearsals and even before the rehearsals. If the rehearsals are done accurately, the performance also has a good chance being excellent, but that does not mean the work of the choir leader is done before the performance. No, as the leader it is important to be sharp from the beginning to the end. In order to know the music, to lead the choir in the music and to keep it as one. The leader's role is to know and have a vision of the music and one can think the choir as one voice and by coaching and leading the group to sing through the artistic vision one has. These aspects of leading a choir goes beyond "just" musical competences, these are skills I see are related to leadership and I am intrigued to explore them more.

1.1 Aim of the thesis

The aim of this thesis is to study the concept of leadership in the context of choir leading and explicitly how choir leaders reflect upon leadership as a part of leading a choir. Specific questions I seek to answer are: 1) In which ways are leadership skills included in the role of a choir leader? 2) Is knowledge about leadership seen as important by choir leaders and 3) which skills (activities) are perceived as examples of good leadership praxis.

Many choir leaders in Finland leads a choir as a part time job alongside their main occupation. Many leaders are educated in music, but most often not with choir leading as a major subject. Leadership may not even have been a part of their education in choir leading. Leadership, in general, could from my perspective be seen as a needed skill for a choir leader, alongside with music knowledge, pattern technique, singing skills and artistic vision.

To achieve knowledge about how choir leaders reflect upon issues related to leadership I have conducted a qualitative questionnaire (appendix 1). The questionnaire was distributed to choir leaders around Finland and I got replies from both female, male and

mixed choir leaders, Finnish-speaking and Swedish-speaking respondents of different ages.

The questions were about which ambitions they have for their own work as a choir leader and how they reflect on leadership in their role as a choir leader. By including their own ambitions or visions of their work, I got a more specific insight of them as choir leaders. Other questions were more connected to the choir leader role and leadership. The empiric data and statements I received are summarized and analyzed in chapter three.

When I was analyzing the answers, I was left with the feeling that I wanted to know more, to get more in-depth answers and explanations of why they think in a certain way or how they work as choir leaders. Therefore, I decide to complement the material by interviewing three choir leaders in order to get a deeper understanding on how choir leaders reflect about leadership. The interviews were thematic interviews based on the experiences from the questionnaire but also included some new topics related to leadership and choir leading. These interviews I have summarized to a few specific topics in chapter four.

This thesis consists of two main parts, one theoretical and one empirical. The theoretic part is a guide into the theory of leadership and choir leading. This part, chapter two, I call *Leadership by the book*. In the empirical part the goal is to learn what choir leaders think about leadership and the importance of leadership skills. In my analysis (in chapter three and four) the statements of the informants are explored and discussed within the theoretical framework of leadership and choir leading theory.

2 Leadership by the book

The history is full of leaders of many kind which have had an influence on society: Julius Caesar, George Washington, Alexander the Great, Donald Trump, Theresa May, Adolf Hitler, Cleopatra, Steve Jobs and many more. Leadership is nothing new, but the literature and concept of leadership in the modern world, has its roots in the late 19th century. This was when industries, companies and the whole society changed and shaped to what is more of the modern business world. In the same era, the social sciences began to advance from philosophy and assume their own academic identity. (Bolman & Deal, 2013, 401)

Leadership has obviously changed form since this era, every decade has its different view on leadership. The position of the leader shows how society, culture and values change. The way the leaders worked in the 50's is not the same as they worked in the 90's, and it certainly will not be the same in the 21th century either. Time is constantly changing, industries and companies are different now from what they were in the past, economic aspects also have a rather big influence on how leadership, leader positions and leader roles impact. (Ståhlhammar, 2007, 25-44; Lätt, 2015, 20-21) Qualities of good leadership follows the changes in the society.

Leadership is not built by power nor by knowledge alone, leadership is more an activity than a position. (Bolman & Deal, 2013, 406; Erikson, 2018, 30). If you want to be a trustworthy leader you cannot use your position to gain power and think people will willingly follow your vision and strategies. As a leader you earn the power by having influence, by being charismatic, by sharing your vision and by having respect for the people you work with (Maxwell, 1998, 22-24, 132, 179-181).

According to lecturer, communicator and leadership developer Thomas Erikson leadership is also about communication and to reach out, regardless of the message. If you do not know how to praise, criticize, give instructions and support, nothing will work. (2018, 29). The way to good and effective communication is through listening. If you cannot listen it is not communication but information (Törnblom, 2010, 93). According to Törnblom, good communication includes listen to ideas and visions, ask for progress and be there as a sounding board. In the theory of communication there are four categories: reading, writing, speaking and listening. The competence of listening is probably the easiest to forget. To remember to listen is also to be able to remain silent for a moment, to think

about what was said and then respond. You can also call this active listening. When we interact with others, we also expect them to listen to what we have to say. (Törnblom, 2010, 93-95)

It is also important to think about how you speak, only 7% of communication is your words, 55% is body language and 38% is your voice (Lätt, 2015, 170-173). With this in mind, one also might give a thought to whom you are communicating with: it is important to know your audience. Do not try to use big words or complicated language only to be perceived as good and qualified. Simple and clear is better. (Maxwell, 1999, 39-42)

2.1 Leader or boss

To be a boss and to be a leader is often confused as being the same thing, but in fact you can be a boss and a leading person without being a leader. The difference between a boss and a leader is that a boss or managership is a position, a leader or leadership is a relation. (Lätt, 2015, 30) A boss knows the walk for the company, but he might not walk it or show it for others, but a leader knows the way, walks the way and leads the way (Ljungars, 2012, 15). Leadership is not a position and power, it is a way of getting people forward in the same way: To share vision and wisdom, to delegate information and tasks, to be the person to lean on and to trust in. A boss on the other hand has a more negative sound, it is a position with much power and in a historical aspect the head person in a company. (Stålhammar, 2007, 19-23) A boss might be a person you fear, whereas a leader is the one you admire. A leader is not always the person with the most knowledge or who has been longest in the company. A leader is the person who knows how to share the knowledge and how to work together towards the best result.

Leaders is one step ahead, that is why they are called *leaders*. Leaders aim for progress, knowledge and development not only in themselves but in the company/team as well. (Maxwell, 1998, 47-48) A leader should not believe that their team is fully learned nor let the leader position go to their own heads. One important role a leader actually has is to be the servant, a servant for other people. This does not mean you should get the coffee every morning, but to serve knowledge and guidance to others. (Ljungars, 2012, 17) By being a leader, you also earn trust, and one way to keep it is to constantly renew yourself with knowledge, plans, skills and methods.

2.2 Leadership roles

Today, in the 21st century, leadership is no longer structured by only qualifications, but one gets big help by listening to these qualifications and adapting them to different roles as a leader. (Lätt, 2015, 20-22) Leadership can be based on personality, and because every human is unique and have different personalities, there is no manual for leadership that works for everybody and in every organization (Braw, 1997, 9-12). Leadership is more of a profession itself (Lätt, 2015, 18) or an activity rather than a position (Bolman & Deal, 2015, 406). Since leadership is built on personality and every team is different, I will here conceptualize the different leader roles as, for example, the artist, the lion, the ear or the coach. These are only some of the roles and depending on the team, the work, personality and the day, the roles vary, and other roles might also appear. When one is in a leading position one does not only have one role in a company, like for example a salesman or a teacher. No, as a trustworthy leader one need to be able to many "roles".

2.2.1 The ear

A good leader is also a good listener. To listen to the coworkers and to be a sounding board to other people's ideas, opinions and visions. (Maxwell, 1999, 97-101) There is a reason why people have two ears and one mouth, so we can listen to others more and not only stand and explain. When listening to one's coworkers' thoughts and opinions, one gets a wider insight in the group and/or the organization (Lätt, 2015, 155). By listening one also create an impression of caring and seeing people. These are two valuable things to carry with oneself if one wants people to follow, because then one has to show humanity and qualities that people cooperate with, respect and trust.

2.2.2 The teacher

There are probably many big leaders around the world that are not such good teachers, and many teachers who are not good leaders. But one role a leader has, is the role of the teacher. Not a teacher for knowledge but more for the way of being. As a leader, one is a role model, and an example in both behavior and performance. If there are rules or guidelines in one's work, one needs to be sure to follow them oneself if one wants others to do the same. (Ljungars, 2012, 5-7) If one as a leader do not follow a good example in all

from showing up on time to wanting the company to grow, one misguides the purpose. Practice what you preach (Lätt, 2015, 120).

2.2.3 The lion

A leader is also a lion. A lion is a symbol of courage, strength and power. As a leader one needs all these, mostly in form of courage. Courage to make decisions, to take responsibility, to go first and to stand tall even if one gets negative response or loss. Courage is also important because it is contagious and infects and inspires the people one work with (Wennberg & Norberg, 2007, 9-11, 40-43; Maxwell, 1999, 56).

2.2.4 The camera lens

One other role a leader has is to be the lens of a camera. With the lens of a camera you get the focus of a picture, and focus is one important skill to have as a leader. A leader should be able to focus on the goal or task even if it is stormy. Focus on the good thing, focus on the necessary things and focus on the progress. (Ljungars, 2012, 36-37) Stress in long term is toxic to one's work and one's team. Stress often comes from chaos and defective control (Wennberg & Norberg, 2007, 191). To avoid stress, one need to, as a leader be able to focus on the goal and the process one has ongoing.

2.2.5 The coach

The coach is a bit like a teacher, but with a more modern way of looking at things: coaching leadership is more based on the individuals. As a coach one listens, ask questions, for example, how you feel or how you think, and allowing you to grow in yourselves. A coaching leader gives guidance, support and encourages his/her coworkers. (Lätt, 2015, 90-91; Wennberg & Norberg, 2007, 32-33)

2.2.6 The artist

Every leader needs a vision and goals for their work. This vision and these goals the leader also need to share with the team so that all work together for a same goal and to give meaning and purpose (fuel) to the team. (Leigh & Maynard, 2002, 65-68) To share one's vision one has a role as an artist who paints pictures. By painting a picture well, one inspires the audience ("the team") and gets them on board the process of reaching the same goal.

Two skills that are often needed in the role as a leader is passion and patience. There is no specific role to display passion but the spirit and fire within oneself. If one is not passionate in what one does, one could not possibly request others around to be it. But if one is passionate and shows the passion, it will infect others and they will more likely become passionate themselves (Ljungars, 2012, 137-138). Patience, on the other hand, is needed in many situations. According to Erikson, (2018, 171-181) it is especially needed in times, in conflicts or when winds of change are blowing, whereas also in the daily work if the team, for example, is not completely on board with one's vision, if people do not understand or if the work do not go as good or fast as wanted, then one need to be patient with both oneself and with the team, step back and sort out the problems. It can be faults in, for example, the method, communication, vision or the instructions given.

2.3 Vision and goals

A leader, despite if you lead a company or a choir, needs to have a clear vision, and be able to set goals for the team. The vision is the greater picture you paint that reaches for a longer period, it is not the main task for your company or choir, but something that inspire the effort (Leigh & Maynard, 2002, 65-68). In a company your vision can be that your customer service is well-known for its kindness, know-how, quickness and honesty, while in a choir a vision might be the choir sound or the atmosphere you have in the choir.

Goals, on the other hand, are clearer tasks or statements. The purpose of clear goals is to be sure your team knows what to aim for, to get them enthusiastic, become curious, give energy, creative and show talent. (Leigh & Maynard, 2002, 64) When you have set goals that have enough challenges but is not unachievable, you engage your members and motivate them for progress. With this you also create a good flow during the process. The vision can also be the big picture of a project but not the content of the project. If the choir wants to, for example, do a Christmas project, the vision is the spirit and the feeling you want to create for the audience. The goals, on the other hand, are the repertoire and to pull off the concert.

Peter Ettrup Larsen is a Danish well-known conductor, who published a book (Ettrup Larsen 2007) named *Møt dirigenten* ("Meet the conductor", authors translation), and in this book he describes good image of goals. Think your goal as a flower, where the roots are

the planning, the flowerhead is the purpose, the main goal and every leaf are a milestone. The stem is your way and the knowledge you use to your goal. (Ettrup Larsen 2007, 1-2) When everybody knows the goals and aim for it together, you also create a good spirit in your group or team, which is even more positive for the result (Braw, 2001, 54). When goals are achieved, it usually gives new energy and fluid for new projects, new visions and goals – a real win-win concept.

2.4 Leading a choir

A choir leader is more than someone who waves her hands to the beat of the music. Most of the work the choir leader does happens before the performance. A big part of the work even happens before the actual rehearsals start. According to theory books on choir leading, you need a lot of different skills to be a good conductor. Musicality, historical, song technique, piano playing, teaching, emotional, communication and etc, are mentioned as important skills for a choir leader (Ettrup Larsen, 2007, 1-2; Enevold et.al, 1994; McElheran, 1989, 3-4). If one looks back in history a few decades one can see that the choirs have changed quite a lot. Still in the mid-20th century, it was often the teacher in the older elementary schools and/or the cantor in the local church who lead the choir. (Uggla, 1984, 35) Many of the active choirs of today also were founded after the war and according to Kari Turunen, one big turnout in the Finnish choral life is in the 50's when many chamber choirs were funded (Kronqvist, 2014, 19).

Today we have many different types of choirs, not only church choirs, but pop choirs, "choir-for-everybody"-choirs, a capella choirs, male- female- and mixed choirs, folk music choirs, student choirs and etc. The choirs often have boards, that together with the leader plans the activity and sometimes also the repertoire (Brink, 2019). In Finland we have only one professional choir, the opera choir in Helsinki (Ooppera Baletti, w.y), whereas amateur choirs we practically have located in every village. (Brink, 2019). Categorizing choirs professional or amateur is quite harsh, because amateur choirs have very different ambitions and the category includes both choirs with a professional way and ambition to choirs that sing for joy (Kronqvist, 2014, 22).

To lead a choir, you have two different views: One is that the choir are your instrument and you practice and play with it while the other is that you are a leader and lead a group

of people towards the same result. (Dahl, 2002, 51) It is a bit complicated to have an instrument that you lead, not master, but explicitly lead, since this "instrument" is people. Choir leading is a mixture of pedagogical and artistic work (Kronqvist, 2014, 19) and therefore, the choir as an instrument is unique, because the sound changes depending on if, for example, all the choir members are present. As a choir leader one can work with pitch and the sound, but in the end, when it is not oneself who produces the sound, it is the members that make up the instrument.

2.4.1 Preparatory work

As in any other job the work before the rehearsals begin, the preparatory, is the most important. As mentioned before, most of the work a choir leader do is before and during rehearsals, not in concerts when the audience is present and evaluate the work.

To be a choir leader you most often also have the responsibility to decide what repertoire the choir sings (Dahl, 2002, 60). But when the repertoire has been chosen the groundwork begins. What is the music? What is the text? What is the message of the piece? Where is the melody, harmonies and tempo? These are the first steps you must encounter. (Uggla, 1984, 48; Ettrup Larsen, 2007, 123) The next step is to learn the piece yourself, not only the overall experience, both text and melodies/parts, the relationship between the parts. In this case it is useful to have enough piano skills in order to be able to play at least two parts at the same time, most preferable to be able to play everything at the same time. This will not only help the choir to get a better picture of the piece from the beginning, but also the learning process is quicker. (Dahl, 2002, 53-56) It is also helpful to study a little bit outside the score, for example, meaning of the song, something about the composer, the significance of the text, is there something special that relates to the piece or the time period when the piece was written, or useful trivia that can be fun to know. (Dahl, 2002, 54) As the choir leader all this is based on your image as a leader, your knowledge and you having a clear vision of the project.

With the preparatory work you set up a plan on how you study the piece with the choir. (Uggla, 1984, 48) Prepare your rehearsals so you know what to do, when and why. You should also have a long-term plan. In that way you know the choir learns the piece in time. Dahl (2002, 63) also points out that everything takes its own time and the choir needs time to process both melodies, text, harmonies as well as interpretation.

2.4.2 Leading the music

If you lead a choir, you need some musical knowledge, for example, being able to read sheet music and having basic knowledge of music analysis. Pattern technique is also necessary alongside vocal technique. Piano playing skills are not necessary but a very good skill while practicing parts. Another possibility is singing all parts, playing another instrument, for example, the guitar or having a rehearsal pianist. (Uggla, 1984, 35) In the modern world there are many other technical options for learning parts to the choir, such as recorded scores. A good ear and intonation are needed, especially if your goals for the choir are more than to "sing for joy".

As a choir leader you also are most often the visionary of the choir and the songs that are sung. If you have a music committee or a board in the choir, they might take part in planning, by giving ideas of different themes or special songs, but in the end, it is always the choir leader who leads towards the musical vision. (Dahl, 2002, 52) Dahl gives a few pieces of good advice on how to plan concerts or projects in her book *Körkonst*. By beginning with the intentions for your concert or project, what do you want the audience to feel? Is there a theme to follow? Lay down some scopes and the repertoire is built. Where are the highlights, the introduction and the final? After this it is much easier to find a repertoire fitting the framework, intention and theme. (Dahl, 2002, 80) It is also necessary to stay up to date regarding music, songs, themes and the environment, to collect inspiration, listen to other choirs and meet other choir leaders. (Dahl, 2002, 85) With this you can get ideas, inspiration or visions for upcoming projects or concerts.

2.4.3 The inspirator

Since the choir leader is both the one who leads the musical process and the one who rehearses the music with the choir, it is also a natural role to be the inspirator. When you know the repertoire and you have learned it by heart, your next step is to inspire the choir. To be the inspirator does not mean you as a choir leader have to be super energetic or over the top enthusiastic about the music. This might even be disturbing and not trustworthy. (Ettrup Larsen, 2007, 155) Instead you can try to get the choir to join in the same mood and inspire them by telling the history of the theme or piece, the idea of it or by drawing parallels to, for example, other art such as paintings. (Dahl, 2002, 58, 105) To have passion in the work you are doing and if you have a positive attitude is something that can take

you far. These both are contagious, and if you come with the right attitude about new pieces, concerts or projects, the choir will reflect this attitude as well (Ljungars, 2012, 39).

2.4.4 Choir leader - an entrepreneur?

One can find many similarities between leadership and entrepreneurship. An entrepreneur is a person who takes initiative and organizes innovative activities. Entrepreneurship is about creativity, initiative, experiment and diversity (Johnson, 2015). As a choir leader you also should be creative, innovative and forward going, so in many ways it is exactly the thing you do. As a choir leader you have a vision, maybe an upcoming project, that you want to share with your choir/the board of the choir and hopefully they get on the same page and are willing to share your vision and work together with the project. The difference between a choir leader and an entrepreneur is that the entrepreneurs often do most of the work themselves. They might have a team with them, but they are the head and the leader of their idea and the one who organizes everything. (Johnson, 2015) A choir leader often has a board or a committee with them, and always a choir as their "team", who works together, even if the choir leader might be the visionary behind the idea. So, is the choir leader an entrepreneur? Yes, you can call a choir leader an entrepreneur if s/he is innovative and develop new projects, is a visionary and maybe takes chances in re-thinking or branding the choir.

3 How do choir leaders perceive leadership?

3.1 The questionnaire

For this thesis a questionnaire (appendix 1) about leadership and choir leading was made and sent to choir leaders around Finland. In the questionnaire there were four main questions, one an additional and basic information, to analyze the answers and if there would be any disagreements, does it have to do with gender, age or type of choir.

To my help I had three associations, The Finnish Swedish Song and Music Association (Finlands Svenska Sång och Musik Förbund, FSSMF), The Finnish Choral Conductors' Association (Suomen Kuoronjohtajayhdistys) and The Church Musicians Association (Kyrkomusikerföreningen), who sent out the questionnaire for me. This way the questionnaire reached most of the choir leaders in Finland, at least those who are associated with the three major association. The Finnish Swedish Song and Music Association, is the head association for amateur music in the Swedish-speaking community in Finland. The organization have about 3800 members and a few under organizations in different categories, as different choir types and orchestras. The Finnish Choral Conductors' Association (FCCA) was founded to improve the position of choral directors, the interaction between conductors and choirs and lift the status of both choral conductors and choral music. FCCA presently has a little over 150 members. The Church Musicians Association is a sub association below the Finnish cantor-organist association and has the purpose to link together Swedish speaking church musicians in Finland.

I received 34 responses in total. The respondents had a good variation in age, gender, how long they have lead choirs and type of choir they are currently leading (figures 1-4). This is a good result for the variation of the answers and makes the loss less valuable. The loss of responses might be due to the fact that the questionnaire was sent out in the end of the summer when many still had their vacation and then later forgot to answer.

In the answers, I do not see differences in how long the respondent been leading a choir, nor in gender or what type of choir one is leading. Differences in answers are more on an individual basis. The respondents were both young and older leaders with various ambitions and leaders with different views of how important leadership is in the choral work.

Ålder / Ikä

34 responses

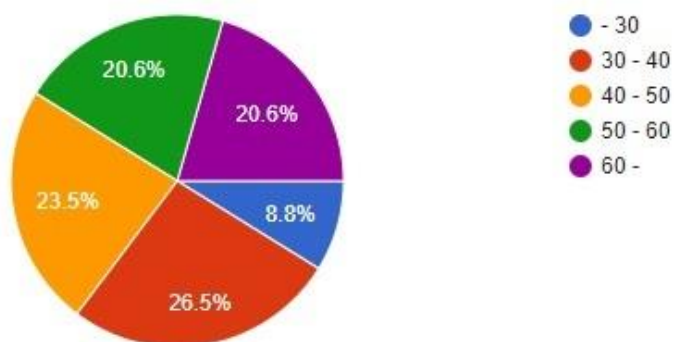


Figure 1. Age

Kön / Sukupuoli

34 responses

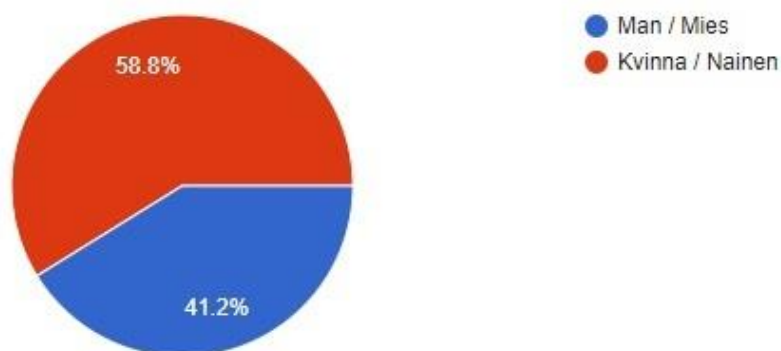


Figure 2. Gender

Körtyyp / Kuoro

34 responses

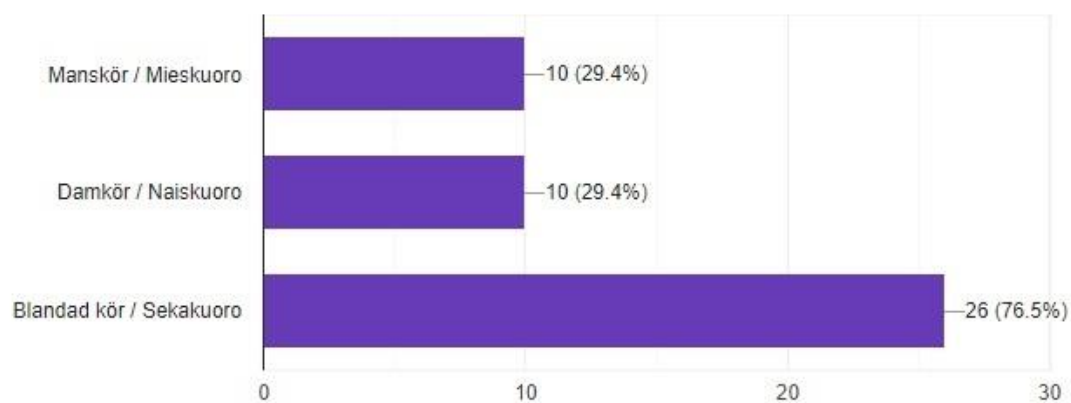


Figure 3. Type of choir

Hur länge har du dirigerat? / Kuinka kauan olet johtanut?

34 responses

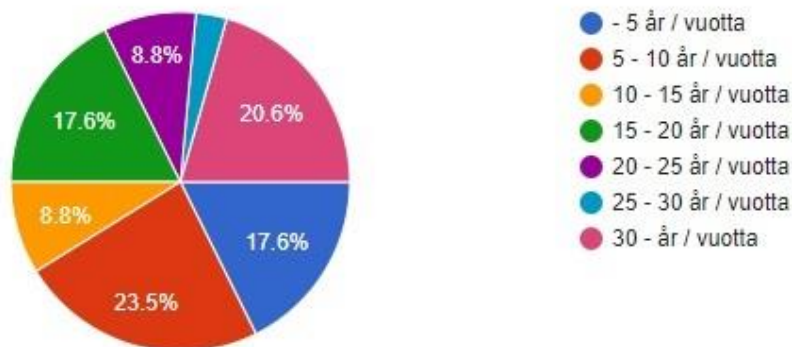


Figure 4. How long have you been a choir leader?

In the following chapters, the headlines are the main questions asked in the questionnaire. To keep the respondents confidential, I have not written out names or other information in the answers. However, there are direct quotes from the respondents.

3.1.1 Why do you lead a choir?

The answers to this question were various, some plain and short and some longer. A few are leading a choir because it is partly their job, some (two) accidentally slipped in the choir leader role when the choir searched a new leader (but these are still leading) and a couple of respondents see it as their musical lifestyle. Some saw the choir as their instrument and that it was the one instrument they feel united with. Many answers were connected to the love for music, choir music, singing and the fun of making music.

"It gives me energy, I get to teach and inspire, and I get to be inspired myself"

"To sing and make music together will do good. It is amazing to be enabling it"

"Because the human voice is expressive in a unique way"

However, most of the answers were still about the group itself. Working with people and to have the chance to be creative together and inspire each other. It seems that many choir leaders find it rather positive to be inspired themselves and to have the feeling they do something good for people's wellness (hobby-wise speaking).

"From a more daily perspective, I see the choir leader job as a wonderful mixture of artistic activities, to get the chance to work together with people and do support them while learning something new"

"The choir leader job is interesting because you get to do music together with amateurs, but still demanding and with a high standard. Additionally, it is nice to see different and people who come from various backgrounds, experience the feeling of unity through music and create art together"

Whether a leader only *slipped in to the role*, it is a dream job to work with music and people or if it is partly your daily job, the common denominator with all the choir leaders, is still to get to work with music and people. Having artistic views and be able to work with different projects. Furthermore, the choir leader job is never the same, there are always new things to learn, new people, new voices, new challenges, new projects and you get energy from the work being done. It is a versatile job, where you can fulfill your musical dreams, be creative and work with different people.

3.1.2 What ambitious goals do you have for your choir?

In this question the differences of the choir levels were revealed. Some have very high ambitions with CD's, competitions and high-level concerts, while others are pleased if it sounds fairly well. Despite the differences there was one common tread through most of the answers: the wish to progress, both as a choir and as individual singers and to find repertoires suiting for the choir and to give concerts over expectations. Two of the more advanced level choirs' leaders answered:

"I want to go 'as far as possible', above all musically and artistic. We hope to be able to construct our own home audience and establish in Finland that rhythmic music can be done on a kick-ass level in a choir, not only as the little entertaining number at the end of the Christmas concert"

"High singing standard, varied and challenging music productions, different and new types of concert productions"

"I always try to develop the choir to sound even better. With an amateur choir it is a challenge, so you do not set to high goals. It should be a decent pace depending on the level of the choir"

So even if there are differences, they have the same strategy; to progress and get better. In these answers you also see how the role of the teacher and the leader role is important.

"To build an instrument and coach it to sing as good as possible"

"First, I want the choir singers to develop as much as possible, both when it comes to personal musical development and the music we make together in the choir. I set short, realistic goals for my choir, that will not feel unachievable, in this way I have seen they develop best"

A good leader is one who knows the group and how high to set the goals, so that the group develop in the way the leader wants. A good leader also coaches through the process, without leaving the group in the lurch.

One answer was interesting and something choir leaders should not forget, even if they want the result to be as good as possible or if the goals are high, and that is the weekly experience for the singers:

"...but maybe one, even more important is to make the weekly rehearsal an experience, that carries forward in the middle of everyday life"

One should always remember that a big part of the goal is the way there. I think the majority of the amateur choir singers join a choir for the weekly rehearsals and the feeling of togetherness and joy for music. The concerts, progress and development are a bonus and a kick for them, but not the main purpose. Then a leader also should have it in mind while leading to the goal the choir aim for.

3.1.3 What qualities do you think is the most important for a choir leader? (name three)

Qualities for a choir leader seem to be as many as choir leaders themselves. There are no right or wrong, but maybe good and better qualities. You probably come far as a choir leader if you have musical competence, have social skills and some "basic" leadership skills in your pocket, meaning you know it is you who make decisions, organize and are the leader. Depending on the choir, you can add empathy, pedagogical skills, being inspirational, vocal technique and piano skills to qualities you find important. From the answers in the questionnaire I have categorized four skills that are important to a choir leader.

According to the answers, musicality or musical knowledge is evidently a quality a choir leader must have. You do not work as an electrician if you do not know anything about electricity. If you work with music and as a choir leader, you need to know music. The musical knowledge should also be better than the choir members. If you lead a choir with high ambitions or a nearly professional choir, your own skills should go together, but if you lead an amateur choir, where the goals and level of ambition are not as high as a choir on a nearly professional level, you might get along with basic music knowledge as sheet reading, piano playing and some singing skills. Words that came as an answer in this category are: musicality, musical knowledge, musical sovereignty, hearing, rhythmical, some instrumental playing skills and musical vision.

Social skills came in second place among the qualities that was listed by the respondents. You can be a social person in many ways, but some answers were more specific and claimed that you should know how to work with people, to listen to them, to be judge of people, to compromise if needed, have patience and have good communication skills. A few also mentioned empathy and respect for people and to transmit a good vibe in rehearsals.

Leadership and pedagogic knowledge came in third place. I decided to group these qualities together, since some of the answers were written so they would fit in both categories and because many things are similar when you are a leader and a pedagogue: you know how to lead your group, to analyze and react if needed, to motivate and chose fitting repertoire. Leadership skills, organization and decision making, are good to have when you work with people and act as a leader. However, I want to highlight the following comment:

"...determination, a way to lead, but still to work as a friend in the choir"

Only because you are a leader of the choir you do not need to be bossy nor unobtrusive in the choir. This might combine the social skill part, but as important as good leadership are, as important it is to be social. The pedagogic skills were mentioned when you have an amateur choir, that needs more guidance and coaching. As soon as you have more ambitions, the leadership skills seemed to be more important.

"an amateur choir, that is not as ambitious, needs a really good pedagogue, a more professional choir with higher ambitions needs a leader with strong artistic visions"

To be a visionary and have artistic vision was mentioned a few times as an important quality along with being charismatic, inspiring and enthusiastic. Then you could read between the lines that to have a good artistic vision for your choir is not enough, you need know how to share it also.

"Sensitivity, both musical and social. Musical and esthetic vision. Good communication skills (both verbal and nonverbal). Professionality and know-how are probably given?"

To summarize the qualities, I will try to describe a person fitting for the job:

The person is educated in music, a very open, social, humorous and happy person in life. S/he is determined and have great visions of what s/he wants and knows how to get there with their choir. S/he knows how to share the vision and inspire the choir and is not afraid to set up goals. S/he has a good ear and uses his/her pedagogical skills to coach, from different perspectives.

3.1.4 Do you see leadership as an important part of the choir leader role (Why/Why not?)

The answer to this question was a very distinct yes. The argument for the answer on the other hand, varied quite a bit even if the bottom line might be the same: a choir leader is a leader, which means that leadership skills are also needed.

Many of the respondents motivated their answers by referring to chaos

"Otherwise it would be only chaos"

"If the leader is uncertain, the choir members begin to control and set and then it will be chaos"

"Without the leader role, it is the choir who leads the leader"

A choir needs someone who knows the way and says how it should be. Both in the rehearsals and in the long run for goals and progress. In this way the singers can focus on their part in the song, singing and following the leader.

Another big motivation for the leader role being important was about the choir needing someone setting goals and lead the choir to these goals.

"The choir leader should be able to lead the group/choir long-term to work forward in many ways. The choir leader should have a clear goal, an agenda in their work, know where you are going. The choir leader should lead and have the main responsibility for the musicality in the group/choir, but without being an autocrat."

The last part about not being an autocrat came in some answers, and it might be important for the choir members to feel they are part of setting goals or deciding repertoire, but depending on the type of choir, the amount of responsibility varies. A choir with lower ambitions might rely more to the choir leader, when a choir with more ambitions wants to be part of setting goals and musical opinions. In bigger choirs with higher ambitions, there are often a few people from the choir, who, together with the leader, set goals and decide the musical and artistic work.

A third big aspect of the leader role being important, was the need of someone who takes responsibility. It has quite a lot to do with the fact that a choir needs someone setting goals and leading them; someone needs to be responsible for the work being done and achieving the goals.

"The choir members miss this, that someone takes responsibility for them. The choir leader doesn't sing himself/herself, but the choir members make the music. The choir leader gives in the same way credit to their singers, that a business director has to their subordinates. At the same time the subordinates are in need of support for their job, that someone is in the leader role and inspire them forward"

The leader is naturally the one who takes responsibility, especially if the leader also is the one whose artistic work reflects on the choir. A choir leader's job is to rehearse songs, teach about musicality and get the choir to sing as one voice. Then it should be the leader who take responsibility for the "product", regardless of the result. A good leader then also gives feedback, encourages and motivates the choir, which leads us back to the importance of the choir leader being the one setting and pushing to the goals.

Some answers to this question were simply yes or it is a part of the choir leaders work. I would not think these answers are less valuable than the others, even if there were not any justifications to the answers. I rather think choir leaders naturally see themselves as a leader and having a leader role. Therefore, the question might have felt odd. They might

already think it is a part of the choir leader's role to take responsibility, to set goals, to control and set and to be part or head of the musical work.

3.1.5 Something to add

The choice of repertoire is an important part of the choir leader's job. To find a repertoire in the suiting genre, with enough challenges, interesting for the choir and maybe something that not "every other choir" is singing, for publicity, is not the easiest job, but still very important. To be initiative and be willing to implement different projects is also a good quality for a choir leader. Initiative and inspiring enough for the choir, is also good for the solidarity in the choir.

To be social and to care for the choir members was something that were answered to this question. Even if the quality "to be social" was mentioned earlier, I think it is good to mention it once more. Not only for the choir leader, but to be able to create a good social atmosphere in the choir, helps to reach the goals and to the work of the sound and voice of the choir. The good spirit in a choir is often heard in the sound and seen in the result of different projects.

3.2 Analysis of the questionnaire

The answers I got in the questionnaire was both interesting and what I might have expected when I made the questionnaire. According to the answers I got, I think I am not the only choir leader who think there is too little written about leadership in a choir. For new choir leaders the versatility of the job and the expectations of leadership, might come as a surprise. At the same time the young leader might realize that most of the competences they have learned are practical, such as score reading and conducting technique. There is much more in the leader role than only this. The musical education is only one, but all the rest, as setting goals, choosing suiting repertoire, engaging the choir, planning long-term projects, leading people, organizing, teaching, having an artistic vision, communicating, having responsibility and deciding, is a lot of job in only to think it is an easy role. All the above listed are adjustable to any leader-role, regardless if it is in a company or if it is in a choir. Unfortunately, much of this you do not find in the choir leader guides, at least not in the traditional books.

When reading the answers in the questionnaire, I also realized how important the choir leaders find the social aspect in the leader job. I thought I would receive more answers about pattern technique or intonation or how important the structure of the rehearsals might be, but most of the answers were quite like my own thoughts about the leadership role in the choir. The importance of a good social atmosphere is more pointed out in a choir than between coworkers in a company. In the business world you more often talk about the social atmosphere together with stress or conflict (Elmholdt et.al, 2013, 127; Lätt, 2015, 242). As the choir often is a hobby for the singers, the social aspect also needs to be good. Therefore, I think many choir leaders also see the social atmosphere as an important part of choir leading.

I also think the choir leaders see their job as an important part of the choir members' well-being. It is not for nothing that they say singing in choir gets people healthier or happier. As a choir leader you want to get the members to feel good, to progress and to be a part of a community through music. We might not be in the healthcare business, but we sure do a good and important job for it.

I do not know if it was a good or bad result to get "only" 34 answers but the answers I did get, was from a wide presented group of choir leaders. In that sense I am very satisfied with the outcome. Among the respondents there were leaders who has been working for many years with choirs, and leaders, who was only starting their choir leading career. There were both male and female leaders, and older and younger, and still the answers did were no in conflict with each other.

The questionnaire was a very interesting way of getting an insight in how other choir leaders see their work. Usually people work as they have always done, without analyzing the job or their behavior, then some of these questions, as "what ambitious goals do you have with your choir", is a good reminder if the choir is on its way or if you need to rethink. Analyzing and scrutinizing your own work is good for the progress.

4 Deeper into choir leadership – three choir leaders' point of view.

To complement the questionnaire, I conducted three interviews. A questionnaire is a good way of getting a wide perspective of things, but with face-to-face interviews you get deeper in the role and can compare the choir leader with leadership by the book. Two of the interviewed had filled out the form and one had not. Two has a master's degree in choir leading (as a major subject) and one choir leader with a master's degree in music. To hide the identity of the interviewed, I will use fictive names such as Heidi, Thomas and Isabelle.

The interviews were thematic interviews where I consciously did not have a list of questions ready. I had on the other hand the questionnaire as a base of questions to help get the interview on the track of leadership and depending on the answers and topics in leadership I started questioning for more information. Every interview took around 60-90 minutes, which limits the topics and discussions. The following chapters are not structured according to specific questions but around the themes that was discussed.

4.1 Musical knowledge

The choir leader should be the one with the knowhow. According to all three interviewees a choir leader needs to "*know your shit*" (Heidi) as everything is based on the musical knowledge and that you as a choir leader are the expert. Even if leadership is not based on only knowledge, it is an important part in the work and because a choir leader also includes teaching and coaching, the knowledge weights heavier. In Finland, the choir singers are often amateurs, and the leader is the professional. Most of the choir leaders do not have choir leading as their major, and they do not need to either, because you do not lead on paper (Thomas), but they do have some musical training and you are expected to have it too. Isabelle also pointed out that you do not need to be the best in everything, or you can not be the best in everything, because choir leading holds so much. It is pattern technique, piano playing, the voice, theory, intonation, communication, leadership, group dynamic and performance. In fact, it is not possible, even if you know it many times is expected of you. And you cannot lead a choir if you do not know where the third stroke goes, but it is built in your expertise that you should have. Then the best choir leaders and musicians

often is the ones that admit that they do not know everything, as Thomas said. There are many amateurs who “knows it all” but real professionals know what they can or cannot do.

Thomas also pointed out that as a part of musical knowledge, choir leaders could be better in knowing more about other choirs and other choir leaders: What they do and what kind of music they sing, because choirs should not compete, especially not in smaller municipalities or cities, but instead complement each other. Unfortunately, this is due to lack of time and money, if you have had a position where your job is to build a network and get knowledge and it is expected of you to attend other choirs’ concerts and so on, but often the lack of time and resources do not allow it. Even if there should be better improvements in networking and cooperation.

4.2 Planning and repertoire

For a choir leader it is important to have a plan for the choir activity. Just as Dahl points out, the planning and the preparatory work is the most important part of the work. (2002, 63) Preferably a five-year plan, a three-year plan and a plan for the ongoing year. Then it is easier to plan and prepare for coming projects. For example, Thomas had a project he knew he wanted to do a modern mass with one of his choirs, but it required more technique from the choir, so he started three years earlier, to rehearse the harmonies and technique through for example warm-ups and voice technique. When the choir finally got the sheet music for the mass, they were first chocked and said they will never pull it off, but when they later realized that they already knew the harmonies and that they could do it, it was much easier. Therefore, to plan ahead and prepare a few years instead of rehearsing the same thing a few years is better, it is better for the atmosphere in the choir and better for the result.

All the choir leaders thought the same, that it is the choir leader who has the final saying regarding the repertoire. The choir leader has the best knowhow on what is appropriate for the choir, what has enough challenges or what fits best for a specific theme. The choir leader has the best eye for it. Then they all gladly gets inspiration and inputs from the choir or the music committee (if there is one), but in the end it is the choir leader who has the final word. Heidi said in a funny way that she is not a dictator but pretty much “her party”, because she is the one who developed the material. The choir accepts that, and because a

choir holds as many musical tastes as singers, you cannot please everybody, but also the singers know that it will come projects where they sing a repertoire that appeals more to their taste, if the current one does not and it in the end is good. Isabelle also said that she does not want to work with anything that doesn't speak to her, or that she knows she will get fed up with it in a few weeks, only because the choir wants to. In the end, nobody wins in a situation like that, because both you and the choir should believe in the material you perform, and sell it, if it can sound trustworthy.

4.3 The choir leaders' "concert gear"

Heidi spoke much about that a choir leader should have a concert gear, that the choir does not need to know about or see in the rehearsal situation. On the rehearsals you can be very demanding, and point at every little detail, but when you have a concert you should let loose and give a little bit extra. It is about the ability to expose yourself, and that needs quite much inner courage to do. In the best situations the goal many times is that you can canalize the music you read, through the choir and out to the audience. To create a good flow in this. The choir is in a way the mirror of the choir leader and the choir leader is the mirror of the choir. Furthermore, when you have that little extra to give in concerts, it reflects back to the choir and they also perform somewhat better and together you create a good flow in the music. At its best you do not even know who it is who carries the whole, it is the leader, or the choir or only the music itself.

4.4 Social atmosphere

The social atmosphere in a choir is an important part of the choir. Not only the one between the singers, but also between the singers and the leader. It is hard not to build social relationships with your singers, especially if you lead the same choir for many years, then you get some kind of relation to every singer, maybe not a close relationship with all, because all do not match but some at least. Then it is not either a bad thing to have good friends in you choir, it might even be a good thing because you know your singers and know how to speak to them and what you can require. Then it might be good to remember that in the rehearsal and in the choir itself you have a different position; you are the professional and you are there doing your job. To be fair to everybody, and not favorize even if you are good friends or not to focus on someone more than other. Fairness is, at

least for Isabelle, the one thing she endeavor to. It is important for every choir member to be seen, and to feel being a part of something bigger and to feel that they are fairly treated. Therefore, she aims that everybody can go home after the rehearsal with the feeling that they have been seen. It is a big part of the leadership role you have as a choir leader to be fair to everybody and that also directly reflects to the social atmosphere and that everybody feels that they belong in the choir.

When I compare what these choir leaders says and what the leadership books says about relationships in workplaces, I find a disparity. According to Lätt, personal relationships in workplace is not to prefer. This because your trust as the leader might be interfered. (Lätt 2015, 162) Private relationships and friendship in a group is generally a sensitive subject, because there is always the *if something happens*. On the other hand, I do not see why in a choir you should think about the negative aspects instead of the positive ones. To know your choir at a personal level you also know how you can work with them at their best. As a choir leader you still, as already stated, work with people's hobby. Your choir attend the choir at their free time, not to work, but for joy, so you cannot in this case completely compare your role as a choir leader with leading a company. As long as you remember that you in the choir are the professional and while you are a choir leader you also are at work.

The social aspect also goes beyond the rehearsals. Heidi said that, for example, if you are on a choir trip or you have some social gathering with the choir, not to always be with the same people, but to change groups along the way, so you at some point speak and socialize with everybody. In this way you also build your relationship with the choir and you place yourself and make you easily reachable. The threshold should be low for the members to contact you if there might be something to discuss, good or bad. You also build up a trust within the team that is important for the fellowship and in the end also for the work in the choir. Everything in the atmosphere reflects in the singing. In for example rehearsals, if you yourself are feeling stressed about something, it reflects on the rehearsals and in the end, it is the music which suffers (Isabelle). Therefore, the social atmosphere and the relationships in the choir are a very important part of the job as a choir leader.

4.5 Choir leader – teacher or coach

With Isabelle we talked about if the choir leader is more like a football coach in that sense of rehearsing and working well that when it comes to concert situations you can trust each other that you know what to do. Choir singing is teamwork where you are the head and the one that see the whole picture, you who have the vision and the game plan.

Depending on the level of the choir Isabelle sees herself more as a teacher and more of an artistic visionary. For her choir where mostly amateurs sing, she is more the teacher and uses the artistic side more as an input and inspiration for the singers in how it could be done. In her other choir, where most of the singers have some kind of music education, she is more the artistic leader, and where it is more required from her that she works in a more artistic way.

As a choir leader you have the responsibility to learn your choir new songs and pieces. If the song is unknown for the choir members, you start with the overall picture, before you move on to practicing parts, text, melodies, harmonies and intonation. Except for the piece, you also focus on singing technique and pronouncing. In many ways you are a teacher, but the word coach can be more suiting if the level of the choir is higher and your goals are much higher than singing the songs right by note. If the choir is so good that you do not need to put much energy on learning the parts or if they learn more individually, you can coach them and focus on sound, intonation and performance on the rehearsals.

As Isabelle said, coaching works better in choirs with a higher level. In coaching one focus on the group and how the group develop the best, but from the groups own perspective. In coaching the other part takes an active role and learns to analyze and reflect their work (Gjerde, 2012, 137). In a choir this means that the choir members actively listen and interact with other singers. The choir members come with ideas how a song sound best and what to focus on at the moment. The choir leader role then becomes more passive but still working as a sounding board to the choir's ideas. Coaching can, therefore, become somewhat chaotic, especially if there are many strong opinions. But to include coaching and to have coaching as a tool as a choir leader is not a bad idea no matter the level of the choir. One can include coaching in a level suiting the choir's level of ambition, so the members also learn to listen and be active in the learning process.

4.6 The choir leaders' respect for the choir

One part of the work as a choir leader is also to have the respect for the singers. This was something all three interviewees brought up spontaneously during the interviews. In the modern world one often has a million things to do, they have children and their hobbies, they have work and maybe meetings or something on their minds, they have a household with cooking and cleaning, maybe a sick mother to care for, and in some point they also want to find time to keep fit. Still they actively choose every week to come to the choir, some may also travel a long way to be in your choir, so the respect to the singers that you make their time in the choir so valuable, that they choose it, week after week, despite all the other million things in their lives. It would be disrespectful of one, if one is not prepared, if one does not have a plan for the rehearsal and not to give value for their time so to speak. This is in many ways a beautiful honor for the choir leader that the singers choose the choir, that one makes it so interesting, fun and in a way addictive, so they want to be a part of it.

4.7 The main leader role in a choir

When talking about leading a choir and leadership, it became clear with all the leaders that the leadership comes quite natural with the choir leader role. It is hard for a group with 20 plus members to work without one taking the leader role. A choir needs someone who sees the whole picture, has a game plan and leads the rehearsals. You might have a board helping you, where the president also is one form of a leader, but overall there should be one who has the final word and who takes responsibility, responsibility for the repertoire, the goals, the artistic view, the rehearsals, the projects and the long-term planning.

Once again, going back to the fact that many choirs work as a positive input and as a silver lining in their everyday life, you as a choir leader have a responsibility to work for it to. In a choir you can have both members who wants to take an active role in planning and rehearsing, as well as members who wants everything served. The choir leader is usually paid to be the one that takes the main leader role, otherwise it would be disrespectful for the choir.

5 Conclusion

Before I reach a conclusion, I find it important to repeat the three main questions that has lead process with this thesis: 1) In which ways are leadership skills included in the role of a choir leader? 2) Is knowledge about leadership seen as important by choir leaders and 3) which skills (activities) are perceived as examples of good leadership praxis.

Choir leading and leadership in general have many similarities: planning, preparatory work, having a vision, setting goals, inspiration, communication and responsibility. All of these are skills that are included in the work as a choir leader but, for example, such as planning and preparatory work are also part of teaching, therefore, I understand if choir leaders do not reflect them direct to leadership, but to a teaching job.

Choir leaders, as for how they responded in the questionnaire, do see themselves as leaders and they find leadership as an important part of their job. Beside the point that it otherwise would be chaos, choir leaders see themselves as important decision makers: deciding repertoire, being the one with the music knowledge and having the artistic vision in the choir. However, I think some of the respondents have not reflected on their leadership role so much in their work as a choir leader, even if they have worked as a leader. This because some answers were shorter and not as detailed as I had hoped. This statement also raises questions of the validity of my conclusions since they are based on a quite small, but varied, sample of answers. For this study I was satisfied with the representation and respondents I did get.

When I started writing my thesis, I had a vision about the connection between leadership and choir leading. I have led choirs for some years and with that comes some leadership experience as well. What I had not done was reading about it, more than what is written in books on choir leading. Then I found many books in the library about leadership, and it did not take many pages before I was sold. It was so interesting! Knowledge of how leadership works was fascinating, even if I thought many things were very evident and not at all strange to me.

Leadership over all is still fascinating and it has whetted my appetite. Leadership is definitely worth studying more, because in the end you benefit with that knowledge. In a choir, as a choir leader, it is also good to know about leadership. I do not think you become a good choir leader only because you know much about leadership in theory, but with that

knowledge you can always adjust to your role as a choir leader and become a *better* leader. It might not be the tools you are using every rehearsal because unlike being a leader in a company, when you likely meet your team every day, you meet your choir once a week. Then your focus does not lie on the best ways of inspiring, communicating, creating a good atmosphere in your team or good flow in the rehearsals, some rehearsals might only be focusing on technical parts of the song or learning harmonies. Of course, they are all things that you have in mind because it goes without saying. Who would like to attend a choir that is not inspiring, where you do not feel at ease or where the rehearsals do not give you anything? Choir singing is all about that.

After reading, researching and writing about choir leading and leadership, I think I have become a bit more critical in the way I work as a choir leader. In a good way. It is always good to stop, think and scrutinize yourself and your work. To contact other people in the same area as you is also good, if for nothing else so at least for networking and brainstorming. As a choir leader you are a little bit as a lone wolf. You have your choir, but to reflect your work it is good to socialize with others that "speak your language". It would even be a good idea to have a symposium for choir leaders with the theme leadership.

Is it then necessary to read about leadership for choir leaders? Should it be something that should be more included in the job? It is difficult to say, because in my opinion, I do not think you would lead a choir if you would not see yourself in that position. And people who can see themselves as a choir leader, also have some natural leadership instincts. Therefore, as a conclusion, the musical knowledge and pattern technique are more important to learn first, and then when you have the basics it never kills to get deeper into the subject including leadership in theory.

There is a saying that the leader is nothing without the group, but is it the group who makes a good leader or the leader who makes a good group? I think it is a two-way street. A group needs a leader and a leader is nothing without a group. As a leader (in my case, a choir leader) it is my *job* to inspire the people in my group. It is my vision I share, and they more or less voluntarily follow my lead. People has always a free will, to follow or not. If we do not see ourselves in the position we are, or if you long to be somewhere else, you also at some point search your way to where you feel comfortable and at home. The same things happen in choirs, if you do not like it, you change choir. A leader is as much in that position as all the people in the group. If the group does not feel right, you probably leave

your position and search elsewhere. Then when the group, together with the leader, has a good nourishing atmosphere, it results in a positive flow and gives much energy in return. In the end, I think this is something you hear in the sound of the choir. As a choir leader I have the privilege to be a silver lining in the everyday life of others. Just as the choir leaders I interviewed answered, I have a huge respect for my singers, and it is an honor for me that they chose to come and sing, week after week in the choir I lead.

After reading about leadership, researching what other choir leaders think about leadership and writing a thesis on this subject, I feel I am not done with the subject. It is worth focusing further and it could even be a good stepping stone for future collaborations with other choir leaders, to do an updated choir leader book. In this book you would find both leadership in theory, adjusted to a choir leader role, everything that includes in the job as a choir leader and pattern technique. Not only because of many of the existing choir leading books might be a little bit outdated, but for getting a new and more modern touch.

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"Isabelle", 2019. Helsinki 25.10.2019. Interviewer Pernilla Nilsson-Wik. Interview tape held by the researcher.

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Körledning och ledarskap

En forskning om hur ledarskap relateras i rollen som körledare.
Tutkimus miten johtaus on osana kuoronjahtajarolissa.

* Required

Ålder / Ikä *

- ☐ - 30
- ☐ 30 - 40
- ☐ 40 - 50
- ☐ 50 - 60
- ☐ 60 -

Kön / Sukupuoli *

- ☐ Man / Mies
- ☐ Kvinna / Nainen

Körtyp / Kuoro *

- ☐ Manskör / Mieskuoro
- ☐ Damkör / Naiskuoro
- ☐ Blandad kör / Sekakuoro



Hur länge har du dirigerat? / Kuinka kauan olet johtanut? *

- ☐ - 5 år / vuotta
- ☐ 5 - 10 år / vuotta
- ☐ 10 - 15 år / vuotta
- ☐ 15 - 20 år / vuotta
- ☐ 20 - 25 år / vuotta
- ☐ 25 - 30 år / vuotta
- ☐ 30 - år / vuotta

Utbildning / Koulutus *

Your answer

Varför leder du kör? / Miksi toimit kuoronjohtajana? *

Your answer

Vilka ambitiösa mål har du för din kör? / Mitkä ovat sinun kuorosi kunnianhimoiset tavoitteet? *

Your answer

Vilka egenskaper tycker du är viktigaste för en körledare? (nämna tre) / Mitkä ovat kuoronjohtajan tärkeimmät ominaisuudet? (mainitse kolme) *

Your answer



Anser du att ledar-rollen är viktig för körledaren? (motivera, varför, varför inte?) / Onko mielestäsi kuoronjohtajan rooli johtajana tärkeä työssäsi? (perustele, miksi/miksi ei?) *

Your answer

Övrigt att tillägga / Muuta lisättävää *

Your answer

Ställer du vid behov upp på personlig intervju? / Osallistutko tarvittaessa haastatteluun? *

☐ Ja / Kyllä

☐ Nej / ei

Om du svarade ja på föregående fråga, vänligen skriv dina kontaktuppgifter här / Jos vastasit kyllä edelliseen kysymykseen, ole ystävällinen kirjoita yhteystietosi tähän

Your answer

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Intervjuavtal

Jag har tagit del av informationen gällande en intervju till denna avhandling och deltar frivilligt i intervjun. Jag är medveten om att materialet spelas in på band samt att materialet senare transkriberas.

	Jag ger mitt samtycke till att bli intervjuad samt att detta spelas in på band
	Jag ger mitt samtycke för att materialet används i eventuellt framtida forskningssyfte

Ort och datum

Underskrift och namnförtydligande
